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Report on an experiment made in Los Angeles...

Sacramento

1917

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REPORT

ON

An Experiment Made in Los Angeles
in the Summer of 1917 for the

Americanization of Foreign-born Women

State Commission of Immigration and Housing
of California

1917 308
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Box 573

CALIFORNIA STATE PRINTING OFFICE
SACRAMENTO
1917

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When, in 1915, California passed its Home Teacher Act, it assumed responsibility for a new idea in immigrant education. Heretofore all adult education had been considered only in the light of its possible reflection upon the welfare of the children. Home visitors had been placed in schools throughout the East. The duty of these women is to look after the homes and parents of children who have shown some subnormality in their school life. The parents of children who have not come to the attention of the teachers as defective, delinquent or retarded, receive no visits from the home visitor; in some states it is especially provided that no visits shall be made until defectives be proved.

The State Commission of Immigration and Housing believes that the problem of immigrant education is distinctly an adult problem. And while no education that is given to the adult can fail to return its share of benefit to the children, that of the adult, and especially the mother, is to be considered on its own merit rather than as a secondary consideration. Consequently, the Home Teacher is for the education of all the foreign women in her district, whether their children be above or below the normal line in school.

Although the law has been on the statute books for more than two years, boards of education have not availed themselves in any large way of this opportunity for extending the service of the schools. In two schools in Los Angeles, however, where home teachers have been regularly established, one under the school board, and the other with the assistance of the Daughters of the American Revolution, splendid classes have been maintained, that have established standards of work.

As a special demonstration of the possibilities of the home teacher, an experiment has been tried in Los Angeles during this summer, in which the various educational forces of the community have cooperated in a large Americanization program.

Twenty-one centers with 27 classes for foreign women have been started in places where the work heretofore has been neglected or unsuccessful. These classes have been taught by students from the Los Angeles State Normal School, either recently graduated, or working for credit at the school. The work has been directed and supervised by a normal school teacher, who is an expert in immigrant education and the supervisor of immigrant education in the Los Angeles public night schools. The project has been financed, in so far as money was necessary, by the State Commission of Immigration and Housing, and supervised by the Los Angeles office of the commission. The International Institute of the Young Women's Christian Association lent its foreign

visitors to the organization of the classes and, through its local secretary, assisted in the supervision of the work.

Only through the splendid cooperation of all the existing agencies could the summer work have succeeded. No local organization was called upon for help that did not promptly respond with its aid.

The Board of Health helped by criticising some lessons which were written on care of the baby and general sanitation. The nurses and housing inspectors assisted in advertising classes. The City Library supplied books and furniture for a house in a locality where no public building was available.

The City Board of Education lent its interest and cooperation and supplied some materials, and the superintendents visited the schools and reported enthusiastically upon them.

The Logan Avenue School—A very high type of women join this class.

As the work was distinctly pioneering in a more or less new field, it was necessary to use all possible assistance to bring the classes together. In each district a woman was chosen who knew the foreigners in that locality. She chose a leader among them and, with the foreign leader and the girls who were going to teach the class, called on a number of the women, asking them what they would like to do, inviting them for sewing or cooking or gymnasium or whatever seemed to interest them. For a week before the classes began the girls visited in the neighborhood making friends with their future pupils.

The classes met in many places. Some were held in the public schools; others in private houses; one met in a settlement; another in the open patio of a railroad camp, and perhaps the most unique of all was a class held in a discarded street car. This car was washed and

cleaned every morning by an employee of the company and run on a siding near the railroad camp.

Whenever the classes met there was an effort to have all the meetings as informal and as social as possible. No set program was ever arranged. For the foreign women, much of whose life is engaged in the drudgery of domestic labor and the care of many children, an academic school has no appeal. When the school is a social event, accompanied occasionally by light refreshments, and when the young teachers who preside over it act more in the capacity of genial hostesses than stern pedagogues, the school begins to take on the nature of a neighborhood recreation.

In spite of the fact that the program seemed casual enough to the students, it was not without definite plan on the part of the teachers. A series of English lessons was prepared which was well adapted to the everyday lives of the women. The names of the common fruits and vegetables and lessons on buying at the store, with the names of weights and money made a good beginning.

During the sewing lessons ample opportunity was given for teaching the English words for the materials used, and simple facts about hygiene and care of the home were taught through English lessons like the following:

baby	tub	mother	stove
bathe	water	warm	soap

I have a tub.
I heat some water on the stove.
I put warm water in the tub.
I put my baby in the tub.
I wash my baby with soap.
I rub my baby dry with a towel.
This keeps my baby well.

In order to unify all the groups, the teachers met for a conference once a week. Each girl came feeling that her class was the most important and her discoveries the most significant of the summer. Theories of approach, education and method were threshed out with much feeling. Many of them came to show supervisors, trained in the work, that things which could not be done had been done well.

It might be interesting to consider some of the places in detail.

In a Southern Pacific Railroad camp, where the families of the Mexican laborers live, there seemed at first little enthusiasm for English and sewing classes, and so, instead of arranging for a regular meeting place, the teachers made calls each afternoon on many of the women, helping them with whatever sewing problems they might have and answering any questions on any subject which the women chose to ask them.

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From this, grew a small sewing class which met from house to house, and various garments were soon in the process of construction. A few clean new aprons, worn to show the result of the effort of the day before, inspired every one to clean dresses, and from this to clean children's dresses and clean houses was but a short step.

Gradually the simple words required for the asking for sewing materials and the names of the implements used in sewing were picked up in English, and before five weeks had passed an organized class of fifteen women was eagerly waiting for the English hour, when a definite lesson was given.

In order to have a good meeting place for the class one woman cleaned up her house and rearranged the furniture to make more room.

School in a Mexican railroad camp.

The teacher was tremendously encouraged when another mother brought in her baby whom she had taught to say "I sweep, I scrub, I mop," vigorously gesticulating with the broom and the mop as she went.

For this group the railroad company is planning to build a good house where they can hold all sorts of meetings for music or parties, with one room equipped for an English class. The superintendent of the company said that they could not afford to refuse any equipment that would make these classes possible as it all returned twofold to the company.

There was another group of Mexican women who lived together in a small colony on the outskirts of the city. These women were also inert about classes, until the teacher offered to show them how to make baby clothes in the American way. Now one woman who keeps the local

Mexican mothers learning English and sewing at East Seventh Street School.

Mexican children at East Seventh Street School playing while their mothers study English.

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In both of these centers, the normal school is going to allow the summer teachers to carry on the work during the winter as cadet teaching.

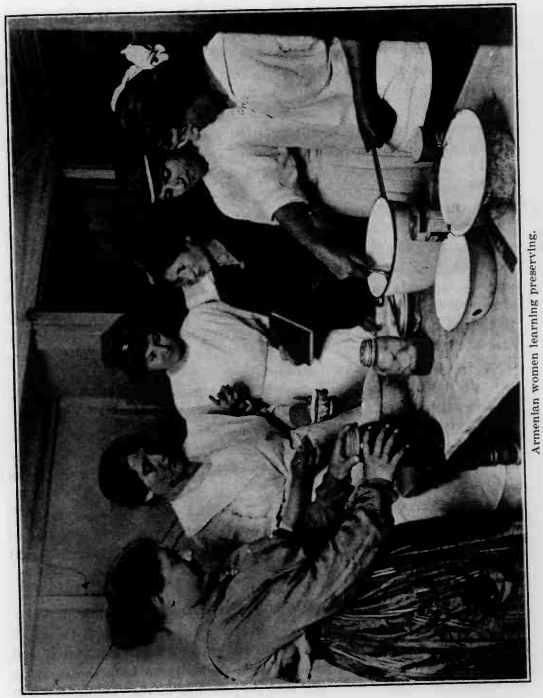
Although the reason for the work this summer was spreading the use of the English language, no mention was made of English in some places for many weeks. Soon the demand, however, became expressed, and when the work broke up for the summer there were women so anxious to continue instruction that they offered to pay a teacher for regular lessons. Sometimes sewing was the attraction and sometimes cooking, and among the Russian Jewish women, always English.

One Italian group was gathered by two young Italian girls, one of whom represented the Sicilians, and the other, the mainland Italians. The supervisors were at a loss to know what these women would like to do until some one mentioned the Red Cross. Immediately the women were eager to sew on Red Cross garments. They said they wanted to do something for the United States and Italy, and this was a fine opportunity. All through the summer the Italians have met regularly and turned out such perfect work that no corrections or changes have needed to be made at the Red Cross headquarters.

There is a group of Armenian women which has been learning to preserve and can all the fruits and vegetables as they came on in their season, and they have a fine exhibit at the end of the summer, as a splendid example of food conservation. The cooking hour is always followed by an hour of English, which is well adapted to the lesson of the evening. One of the things these women wanted to learn most was making ice cream. So the teachers decided to have a party. The cooking lesson preceded. The women brought their own freezer and materials, and when the ice cream was made were so eager to taste it that they could scarcely wait for the arrival of the guests to open the can.

Parties were an important part of the summer's program, and one of the best was given by the Public Library which had its branch near a school in which a group of Mexican women met. The librarian in charge of the children's department was the hostess and she had prepared a charming story about a garden, in which she used all the words the women had used in their English class. As she said "bright red apple," their faces shone with pride and they laughed gaily at the end, so happy that they could appreciate a joke in an English story.

Nothing has given the organizers of the summer program more pleasure than a cooking class which was organized among the Molokan Russian women. The Molokans, with their strong feeling for nationality, their clannishness and reserve, acquired as a result of their long years



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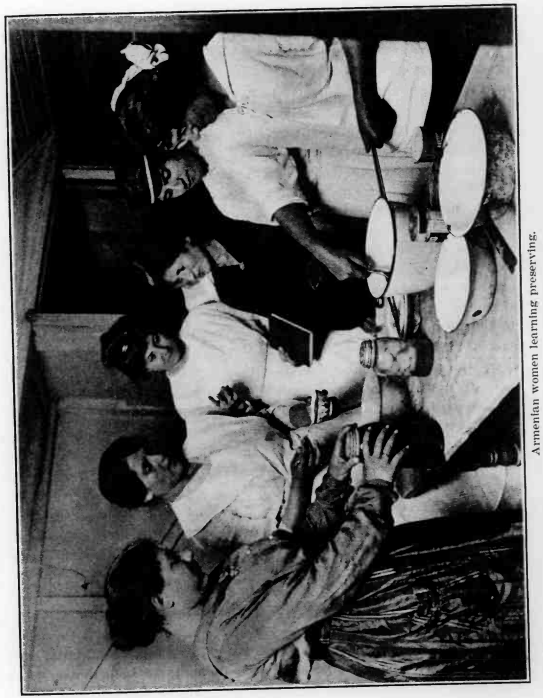

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The women solved the question themselves by asking that they might have a class in which they could learn to make an American pie. Doubtless this is a strange angle at which to begin an Americanization program, but the pie was the opening wedge, and the fathers and mothers and children who came to the school were drawn into an English class before and after the cooking lesson.

In order to show their appreciation for the friendships which had grown up over the summer, the women invited their teachers and supervisors to a party on the last night, at which they prepared some of their choicest Russian dishes, along with some of the American cookery which they had learned in the school.

As the hosts and guests stood about the table with its shining samovar, its huge loaf of Russian bread and tall glasses of hot tea with rich jam to flavor them, the leader of the Molokans pronounced the grace which was common among his people, and every one joined in singing a blessing on the bread. The American guests had a hard task to believe that their homes were just across the city as they feasted on dishes with queer names and looked at the long beards and quaint dresses of their hosts and hostesses.

In all the classes great interest and enthusiasm was shown when lessons were presented on the care of the baby and care of the home. Various nurses, throughout the city, enthusiastically gave their time in demonstrations on these subjects. In one case, with the aid of the mother, a baby was bathed according to the most approved fashion, for the rest of the women to observe.

In other classes a nurse from a local dairy gave demonstrations in modification and care of milk. Splendid demonstrations were made on the text, "Swat the fly!" and in every class the word for screen is well known in English.

The class which meets in the street car is one of the best bits of pioneering of the summer and productive of the most concrete results. In the railroad camp there are about forty families. Upon them has been heaped all the dislike of a prejudiced American community, and the railroad company has been at great difficulty to keep the camp in such clean and tidy conditions that its presence in the community will be tolerated.

After a few weeks of meeting with the women, visiting their houses, where the teachers were invited, the work of furnishing a model house was begun. The furniture was made by the older boys in the camp,

Russian class giving a "banquet" to their teachers.

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under the instruction of a Sloyd teacher. Material for the work was donated by the company. Among other things ten fly traps were built. The curtains were made by the women, and the children contributed pictures, which were cut out and pinned on the wall.

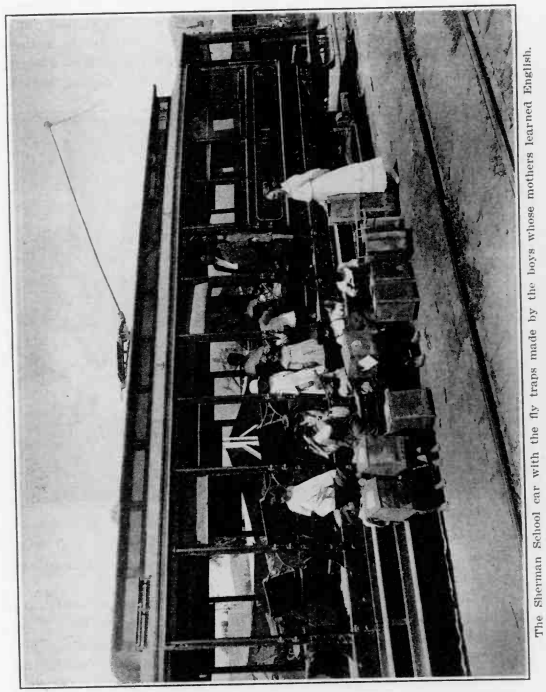
After the regular English hour in the street car, the women went in small groups to the model house, which was not sufficiently large to hold them all at once, and had a sewing lesson.

Before the summer was over the railroad company applied to the State Immigration Commission for similar instruction in every camp along their line, offering to furnish a car as a model house and trans-

Armenian women learning English.

portation to the teachers. The superintendent frankly said that this offer was being made by the company, not for love of its Mexican laborers, but because the summer work had proved that it was economically valuable to them. The labor supply had been more steady. The camp had been kept in beautiful condition, and the satisfaction of the workmen was showing itself in the better care of the track.

For a cooperative effort in Americanization there can be no better example than the classes that have been conducted at the Labor Temple, among the girls of the Garment Workers' Union. The various local unions, with headquarters in the temple, contributed to the rent of the building and the purchase of necessary supplies for cooking and other classes.



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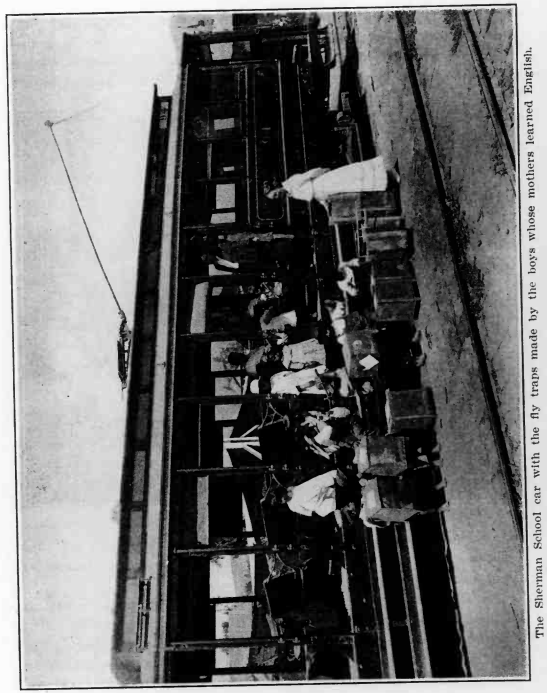

The Sherman School car with the fly traps made by the boys whose mothers learned English.

Here, on three evenings a week, about seventy-five girls assembled. Part of them, who were interested in cooking lessons, prepared a simple cafeteria supper for the rest. Meanwhile the others had classes in millinery, simple Commercial Arithmetic, Beginners' and Advanced English, and the entire assembly comes together after supper for a music lesson. A petition to the school superintendent to have these classes made a part of the school system and taught by teachers working under the school board, was signed by 300 girls. This request is to be

Garment Workers Union studying millinery.

granted and a regular evening school will be held there next year, with the union supplying the building and equipment, and the public school supplying the teacher.

The Japanese were among the first to accept an opportunity for learning anything that had to do with life in the United States. Their demands often far outstripped the knowledge of their teachers. They clamored for classes in first aid, embroidery, tatting, crocheting and knitting, and in spite of these many requests, their interest in English was paramount.

There was one class, which met in the home of a Japanese gardener and his wife, where the men of the class sat around the dining room table and the women the living room table. Here, as soon as the men had learned to read a few words in English, they demanded the words of

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"America," and were soon putting the words to a rather perverted form of the tune of our national anthem. They then demanded that the women join and sing with them, and so they all filed out into the next room, where the women were cutting out patterns for a baby's layette,

Cafeteria supper at Labor Temple prepared by members of cooking class.

and we stood for one verse of "America," and one verse of the Japanese national anthem.

No nationality was overlooked, and special pride has been taken in a class of German women that remained in the school house late in the afternoon until they must hurry to their janitor work in the large office buildings. Nor was it always necessary to group the nations separately.

In some cases Japanese, Mexicans, Austrians, Armenians and Italians were grouped about the table quite as happily as if they had all been born under one flag.

When the summer had ended everyone realized that the work had just begun. Desires had been created which could not be left unfilled. The problem of tying up each group to some permanent institution which would continue the educational program had to be solved before the end of the chapter could be written.

For every center there is some plan for making the work permanent. In some cases it will be through the public schools, in others, through cadet work from the normal school, and in still others where pioneering is yet to be done, the International Institute will hold the classes until they are strong enough to be taken over by a public agency.

The summer has proven what can be done by united effort of all our social forces; but most important of all, it has proven that the young enthusiastic teacher, ready to adapt herself to any circumstance, resourceful, energetic and infinitely sympathetic, is the most effective agent for teaching English to foreigners.

Similar experiments might be made in other places where there is need to supplement the regular classes. It is absolutely necessary that no attempt be made without careful planning that includes:

(1) Supervision by women trained in organization and in teaching English.

(2) Teachers, with special preparation and a social point of view.

(3) Cooperation of social agencies.

Note: Any community wishing to start special classes for foreign women, is invited to correspond with the State Commission of Immigration and Housing at

525 Market street, San Francisco.
226 Union League Building, Los Angeles, California.

The following reports show the methods of two home teachers:

"America," and were soon putting the words to a rather perverted form of the tune of our national anthem. They then demanded that the women join and sing with them, and so they all filed out into the next room, where the women were cutting out patterns for a baby's layette,

Cafeteria supper at Labor Temple prepared by members of cooking class.

and we stood for one verse of "America," and one verse of the Japanese national anthem.

No nationality was overlooked, and special pride has been taken in a class of German women that remained in the school house late in the afternoon until they must hurry to their janitor work in the large office buildings. Nor was it always necessary to group the nations separately.

In some cases Japanese, Mexicans, Austrians, Armenians and Italians were grouped about the table quite as happily as if they had all been born under one flag.

When the summer had ended everyone realized that the work had just begun. Desires had been created which could not be left unfilled. The problem of tying up each group to some permanent institution which would continue the educational program had to be solved before the end of the chapter could be written.

For every center there is some plan for making the work permanent. In some cases it will be through the public schools, in others, through cadet work from the normal school, and in still others where pioneering is yet to be done, the International Institute will hold the classes until they are strong enough to be taken over by a public agency.

The summer has proven what can be done by united effort of all our social forces; but most important of all, it has proven that the young enthusiastic teacher, ready to adapt herself to any circumstance, resourceful, energetic and infinitely sympathetic, is the most effective agent for teaching English to foreigners.

Similar experiments might be made in other places where there is need to supplement the regular classes. It is absolutely necessary that no attempt be made without careful planning that includes:

(1) Supervision by women trained in organization and in teaching English.

(2) Teachers, with special preparation and a social point of view.

(3) Cooperation of social agencies.

Note: Any community wishing to start special classes for foreign women, is invited to correspond with the State Commission of Immigration and Housing at

525 Market street, San Francisco.
226 Union League Building, Los Angeles, California.

The following reports show the methods of two home teachers:

The classes of the summer experiment were supervised by

Miss Ruby Baughman,
Supervisor of Immigrant Education,
Los Angeles City Schools,
Professor in Los Angeles State Normal School.

Miss Sue Barnwell,
Secretary International Institute of Y. W. C. A.

Miss Ethel Richardson,
Director of Bureau of Education,
State Commission of Immigration and Housing.

Miss Gladys Becket,
Department of Home Economics,
Los Angeles State Normal School.

Miss Ruth Hoffman,
Cadet Supervisor,
Los Angeles State Normal School.

The following Normal School students volunteered as teachers:

Mrs. Belle H. Allan
Mrs. Sadie C. Atherton
Nellie E. Bailey
Edna Barker
Nellie Chellis
Elsie Clark
Kate Clark
Mrs. Ruth C. Fish
Marie Fritsch
Mrs. Amy Gardner
Edith A. Green
Norma Harrington
Ethel A. Johnson
Isabel King
Stella L. Lee
Esther Linan
Mrs. Marcia Lowe
Mrs. Adah B. McCorkle
Florence Martin
Irene Martin
Mrs. Mildred Maus
Vivian McClelland
Julia L. McLean
Madge Moon
Kathleen McMahon
Irene Morrison
Dora Newton
Lilian G. Nicholson
Viola B. Nichols
Gladys Pedlow
Mrs. Florine Posey
Lucy Sherinyan
Mildred Shields
Bernice Stratman
Rowena E. Taylor
Mrs. Leslie Valencia
Mrs. C. M. Williams

The following clubwomen assisted with the work:

Mrs. T. V. Barrett
Miss Crary
Miss Laura Emory
Mrs. F. A. Ferguson
Mrs. F. F. Prendergast
Miss Rossiter
Miss Lida H. Thompson
Miss Margaret Philipson

HOME TEACHER REPORT.

By Mrs. Amanda M. Chase.

During the year just closing, I have made or renewed acquaintance with over 350 immigrant families in two school districts.

My home visits run about forty a week. Many of these are concerned with attendance. Not only do I visit for tardiness and unnecessary absence, but in my ceaseless patrol of the two districts, I gather up

children of families who move into the neighborhood but are dilatory about making connection with the school.

Other visits investigate home conditions when the children at school show neglect and malnutrition. These again shade into intimately personal visitations taking up anything from the family budget to open windows and bedtime ablutions. Occasionally I linger for manual demonstration or to direct some deed of cleanliness but more often I leave soap and return later to behold results.

The most striking evolution, however, is seen in such women as attend the group lessons with any regularity. Their improvement in personal appearance and intelligence of countenance is really thrilling. One class of Mexican women, a timid, sloppy, baby-submerged lot to begin with, now take an honorable place on general school programs with songs and recitations in English.

In both districts together more than 150 women have attended the group lessons for longer or shorter periods. They are Mexican, Japanese, Italian, Jewish and Spanish. Instruction has been given in English, sewing, cooking, sanitation and personal cleanliness, singing, patriotism and thrift.

Along with the home visits and group lessons I have taken children and parents to school clinics and connected numerous families with various social service institutions. I have assisted in building up attendance in the two evening schools. I have engineered "parties" galore and in the absence of a garden teacher, I conducted a small supplementary garden campaign.

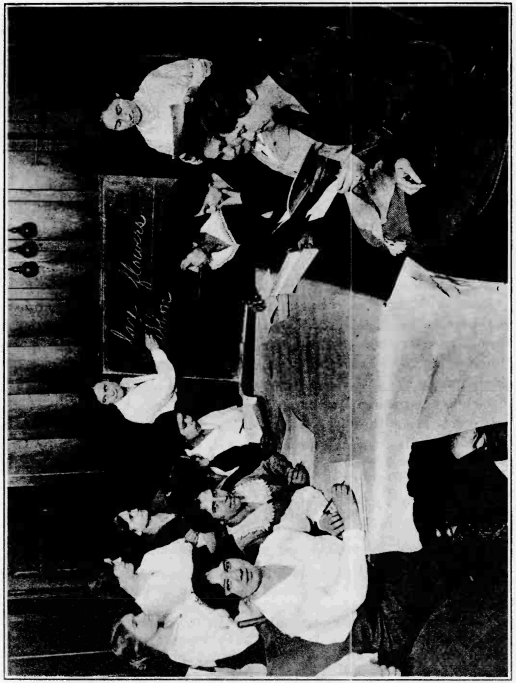
It seems to me that every possible human problem and tragedy gets dropped into the home teacher's lap. And she does what she can.

OUTLINE OF THE POLICY OF A HOME TEACHER.

By Josephine Ringnalda.

(Reprinted from Los Angeles City Schools Report, 1917.)

1. Visit the homes in a friendly way to gain the confidence and friendship of the men as well as of the women of the district.
2. Report to the principal all important information.
3. Report cases of sickness and want to the proper sources of relief.
4. Visit the sick at their homes or at the hospitals, as the case may be.
5. Visit employment bureaus, industrial plants, and places where both skilled and unskilled labor is needed; and make efforts to bring about cooperation between employers and night schools.
6. Get market reports, watch for bargains in cloth, clothing and shoes. Show the women when and where to make their purchases.
7. Hold classes in English, sewing, cooking, mending, shoe repairing, etc.
8. Have excursions, picnics, parties, stereoptican views, with simple talks explaining them, and by these means make the school the community center of the district.



Mexican girls from Garment Workers Union studying English from the Commission's "Home Teacher Pamphlet."

9. Keep a record of each family visited, in which shall appear dates of visits, number in family, condition of family, condition of home, source of income, etc.

10. Visit officers of the societies for Home Finding, and Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

11. Encourage home gardens, and the preserving of fruits and vegetables.

12. Collect cast-off clothing and discarded furniture, and sell at a reasonable figure to the people of district, either for cash or for labor.

HOME INSTRUCTION AND NATURALIZATION.

The following letter from the United States Commissioner of Naturalization indicates the important part home teachers can take in the "America first" movement for immigrant women—women who are potential voters in California:

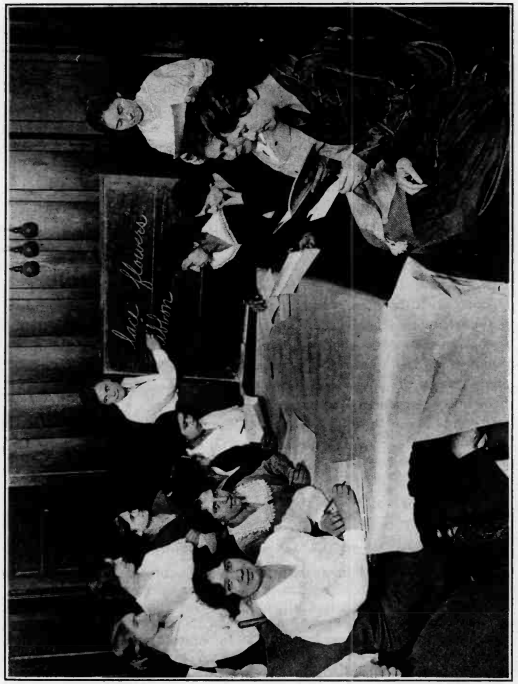
"I beg to thank you for the opportunity contained in your letter of the eleventh ultimo to offer criticism on the 'Home Teacher Pamphlet,' which I have read with great care and interest.

"The chief room for criticism is that such a wise provision of law, having for its object the education of the mother, used in its broadest sense, has not been universally adopted or followed in the other states of the Union. It speaks well for the progressiveness of the people of California that they have recognized the wisdom and need of organized helpfulness in the home, not as the pamphlet aptly states, as a matter of private philanthropy, but in the sense that it is a 'fine democratic level of communal possession.'

"When I say that I have no adverse criticism to make of the curriculum outlined in the pamphlet, I do not by any means intend that the plan may not be improved or enlarged upon, but since your plan is substantially similar to that portion of the bureau's 'Outline Course in Citizenship,' which deals with the instruction of foreign-born adult women, it will be obvious that our views as to the methods to be pursued are in accord, differing, if at all, only in details. The bureau's plan, of course, is larger in aspect, since it contemplates the education—still using that term in its broad sense—of adult foreigners throughout the length and breadth of the United States, regardless of sex. The operations of your state will therefore form a most valuable and effective adjunct of the bureau's general plan.

"At such time as the state of comprehension of the members of any of the classes formed under your plan will permit, I would particularly commend a study of a course in civics. I make mention of this because in your state, women have been endowed with the right of franchise, and it is therefore peculiarly desirable that they shall have some knowledge of the form and structure of government—federal, state, county and municipal. In that way will the newly enfranchised foreign-born woman who votes be able to cast her ballot with understanding and intelligence, all of which will make for a better and purer administration of the affairs of government.

"If there are any real grounds of criticism of the plan of your commission, I am sure that the actual experience and contact of the



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"If there are any real grounds of criticism of the plan of your commission, I am sure that the actual experience and contact of the

home teachers with the mothers will better divulge them than any other means of which I can think, and needless to say, your commission will profit by the results which experience alone can bring. As the 'Outline Course in Citizenship' will show, I am heartily in favor of the laboratory method of instruction, rather than the academic method, which involves the exercise of the memory principally, and correspondingly, therefore, your course of instruction, which is founded on the laboratory method, appeals to me most strongly. In the hands of sympathetic and intelligent instructors, I am sure that that method, as applied to the splendid course of training outlined in your pamphlet, will be productive of the best results.

"With renewed expressions of my appreciation of the opportunity you have given me to become acquainted with the plan of operation of your commission, and with the hope that the results may be as satisfactory as your mode of proceedure merits, I beg to remain,

"Very truly yours,

(Signed) "RICHARD K. CAMPBELL,
Commissioner of Naturalization."

THE HOME TEACHER ACT.

CHAPTER 37.

(Statutes of California, 1915.)

An act to add a new section to the Political Code to be numbered sixteen hundred seventeen b, relating to the employment of home teachers.

(Approved April 10, 1915. In effect August 8, 1915.)

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. A new section is hereby added to the Political Code, to be numbered section sixteen hundred seventeen *b*, and to read as follows:

1617*b*. Boards of school trustees or city boards of education of any school district, may employ teachers to be known as "home teachers," not exceeding one such home teacher for every five hundred units of average daily attendance in the common schools of said district as shown by the report of the county superintendent of schools for the next preceding school year. It shall be the duty of the home teachers to work in the homes of the pupils, instructing children and adults in matters relating to school attendance and preparation therefor; also in sanitation, in the English language, in household duties such as purchase, preparation and use of food and of clothing and in the fundamental principles of the American system of government and the rights and duties of citizenship. The qualifications of such teacher shall be a regular kindergarten primary, elementary or secondary certificate to teach in the schools of California and special fitness to perform the duties of a home teacher; *provided*, that the salaries of such teachers shall be paid from the city or district special school funds.

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END OF
TITLE